

Umno wings urge PM to save RMAF base

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Umno Tasek Gelugor Youth wing said it is time Prime Minister Najib Razak announced his decision whether to allow a private development to be carried out on land in Teluk Ayer Tawar which currently houses the Royal Malaysian Airforce.

Umno Tasek Gelugor division youth chief Mohd Nashrol Hisham Abdullah urged Najib to intervene to ensure that the land is not used for private development as well as ensure the RMAF remains there.

He said that even if party leaders agree, he and another 11 Umno divisions will protest such development.

"Don't remain silent. We want to hear what is the decision on this matter. Is the project on or not? The rakyat of Tasek Gelugor awaits your answer," Mohd Nashrol told Najib.

"If Najib does not take the opportunity to intervene in this matter, how long must we wait? The people often argue that a breakup will happen and will incur losses for Penangites especially those in Umno. We are worried about it," he lamented.

"We have presented the facts to Najib about three months ago, which is why we are brave enough to ask him about his decision," quipped Mohd Nashrol.

Mohd Nashrol was referring to a RM13 billion land swap deal between the RMAF with a private developer to surrender its 400ha base in Butterworth in exchange for a plot of land owned by TSR Capital.

TSR, which has allegedly been granted a RM3 billion contract to build a new airbase on a plot of land in Ara Kuda, Lunas, has informed Bursa Saham in February that it had obtained Putrajaya's approval to develop the airbase as part of the land swap deal.

An integrated mixed project is supposed to be jointly developed in the old airbase in Butterworth by TSR (51% stake) Armed Forces Funds Board (30%) and Pembinaan Bukit Timah (19%).

Mohd Nashrol said the youth wing is also against any effort to use parcels of land belonging to Perda (a federal agency involved in building affordable homes) for the private development.

It is learnt that 400 to 700 acres of land belonging to Perda will be used for the private development.

"Instead of using the land in Butterworth for private development, including building of luxurious condominiums, we suggest that it be upgraded, extended and improved in terms of defence to make it a training center for the airforce.

"The current site is suitable for defence and army purposes (ketenteraan). If the RMAF relocates, it will be a loss to the rakyat, especially those who live in Tasek Gelugor," Mohd Nashol said in a press conference yesterday.

He expressed concern over reports of the RMAF locating to Lunas being played out in the social media and that the ongoing debate in the social media over the issue "reflects our weaknesses".

Mohd Nashol also urged Penang Umno liaison chief Zainal Abidin Osman to take the initiative to discuss the issue with the relevant authorities.

Zainal Abidin (left) and several other Umno assemblymen have expressed their disagreement with the project, while Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the state government will not issue any approval to the developer to develop the land.

"The rakyat has waited for a long time to hear what is the solution to this problem," he said.

"It appears that the development is really taking place. Even if the proposal to develop the land comes from our own party leaders, we will strongly protest," he added.

Mohd Nashrol claimed that about 11 Umno divisions in Penang are with him in their protest.

"We also have a special committee to protest this issue. We have discussed this with the state Umno liaison committee but have still not obtained any decision".